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HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS, INCLUDING ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

Letter dated 14 September 1995 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the final documents of the International Forum for Solidarity against Intolerance, for a Dialogue of Cultures, held at Tbilisi from 13 to 15 July 1995 (see annexes I and II).

The Forum, organized under the joint auspices of Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze, Head of State and Chairman of the Parliament of the Republic of Georgia, and Mr. Federico Mayor, Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), was dedicated to the United Nations Year for Tolerance, proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution 48/126 of 20 December 1993.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and enclosed documents circulated as a document of the General Assembly under item 114 (b) of the provisional agenda.

(Signed) Peter CHKHEIDZE
Ambassador Extraordinary
and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative

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ANNEX I

[Original: Russian]

Tbilisi appeal for peace and tolerance, for a dialogue of cultures

International Forum, Tbilisi, 14 July 1995

We, the participants in the International Forum for Solidarity against Intolerance, for a Dialogue of Cultures, gathered in Tbilisi at the initiative of representatives of the cultural life of Georgia and at the invitation of the Head of State of the Republic of Georgia, Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze, and the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Mr. Federico Mayor, address all those who are concerned by the growth of aggressive intolerance and violence in the world.

For solidarity against intolerance

We share the suffering of those who are victims of intolerance and we express our sympathy and solidarity with them.

We are concerned by the fact that manifestations of intolerance are affecting millions of people and are spreading across new regions throughout the world, breeding aggressive fanaticism, inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts, and civil war.

Cemeteries and places of worship are being desecrated and destroyed, houses of immigrant and foreign workers are being burnt while women and children sleep; people with a different religion, language, culture or skin colour are being slaughtered.

Millions of people are being forced to leave their homes and become refugees simply because they have a different religion or culture. Populations of vast areas and entire countries are being marginalized and excluded from the life of society.

Even in prosperous countries, the germs of intolerance are penetrating into society and creating an environment conducive to violence.

Politicians, state officials, national Governments and international organizations are frequently unable to resist the rising tide of violence which has taken the form of a global epidemic.

Many of the organs of the press, cinema, television and other mass media all too often encourage violence, which threatens to become an integral part of daily life, imprinted into the minds and behaviour of the young.

We cannot remain indifferent to this threat. Indifference and complacency are tantamount to complicity.

We are all jointly and severally responsible for the psychological climate around us. Our moral duty is to resist the spread of intolerance and violence, which lead to conflicts and wars and destroy the dialogue of cultures - the heritage of the whole of mankind.

It is true that cultural differences between various peoples have been the cause of numerous conflicts. But history also teaches us that these conflicts were often followed by lengthy periods of cooperation between former enemies.

We believe that mutual tolerance leads to peace. The examples of this - the peaceful settlement in South Africa and the dialogue now started in the Middle East - should encourage our efforts.

For peace and tolerance, for a dialogue with cultures

It is true that people are different from one another - in colour, language, religion, lifestyle, customs and values. But they are, at the same time, united by common problems, challenges, dangers, dependence on nature, and by a common aspiration for survival and for a better life.

Violence and aggressive behaviour are not genetically programmed into human nature. Violence and aggressiveness are a part neither of our evolutionary legacy nor of our genes. The roots of intolerance are to be found in poverty and ignorance, arrogance and fear. Prejudices, born of ignorance, are the seeds of hostility and hatred.

In today's globally interdependent world, tolerance becomes not only a virtue but a condition for the survival of mankind. Tolerance is understanding of and respect for other cultures, beliefs and lifestyles. Tolerance is the acceptance of differences which exist within our societies and between our cultures. Tolerance is an attitude which considers the diversity of the world as a part of our common heritage.

The dialogue of cultures aims at strengthening the ideals and practices of tolerance as a means of understanding and respecting others, and as a way to achieve mutual spiritual enrichment.

Appeal

Taking into consideration the above, we appeal to all people of goodwill to redouble and unite their efforts against manifestations of intolerance and violence and towards peaceful settlement of disagreements and conflicts through dialogue and negotiation. Dialogue is not only a means of communication but an expression of equality between partners, an art of living together while respecting common moral values.

Aware of our responsibility towards future generations, we call for them to be protected from new wars, as stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations. We must exclude war and violence from the life of the human community and replace the cult of war by a culture of peace.

We appeal to Heads of State and Government, to official representatives at all levels, and parliamentarians of all countries to settle all contentious matters peacefully, by political and not military means. We urge them to remember that all wars were in the end lost by both sides. The paramount responsibility of those who govern is to ensure that peace is secured and the lives of citizens are preserved.

We appeal for efforts to be made to ensure full compliance with current international and national legal norms against intolerance and all forms of discrimination, xenophobia and racism, while respecting fundamental freedoms and human rights, including the rights of minorities.

We appeal to representatives of public and religious life in all countries to use all their authority and influence to strengthen the spirit of tolerance and mutual understanding between peoples with different views and beliefs so as to avoid hostility, to seek reconciliation and to defend the rights, dignity and life of each individual.

We appeal to representatives of cultural life to use all their intellectual and moral authority to inspire a moral movement of resistance to intolerance. The solidarity of all intellectuals and of all people of goodwill can overcome the new global threat of aggressive intolerance by supporting and developing a dialogue of cultures, promoting a culture of peace and tolerance and a culture of democracy.

We appeal to teachers and parents in all countries, to all those who are responsible for bringing up and educating children and youth to raise children and youth in a spirit of openness and respect for other peoples, to instil in them the ideals of tolerance and the rejection of violence, as well as the ideals of altruism, compassion and solidarity for all those suffering from poverty, disease and illiteracy.

We appeal to journalists and to all those who work in mass media to demonstrate personal responsibility while covering the cultural and socio-political life of other peoples, to avoid manifestations of irreverence and intolerance towards representatives of various ethnic groups and religions, and to refrain from eulogizing violence, hatred and cruelty.

We appeal to the young people of all countries to strengthen mutual understanding and friendship with people of their age, to study the languages and cultures of other peoples, to value and respect the diversity of cultures as the common heritage of humanity and to express solidarity against intolerance and violence.

A new culture of tolerance must be developed as the expression of the new interdependence of the world, in which the security of every individual is based on mutual understanding, confidence and cooperation.

To this end, the Tbilisi International Forum has adopted the Programme of Action for Solidarity Against Intolerance, for a Dialogue of Cultures, which we view as our contribution to safeguarding the peaceful future of all peoples, and to building a safer, fairer and a more humane world.

ANNEX II

[Original: Russian]

Programme of Action

"For solidarity against intolerance, for a dialogue of cultures"

International Forum, Tbilisi, 14 July 1995

The International Forum "For solidarity against intolerance, for a dialogue of cultures" was held in Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia, from 13 to 15 July 1995. It was organized at the initiative of Georgian representatives of cultural life under the auspices of the head of State of the Republic of Georgia, Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze, and the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Mr. Federico Mayor. It gathered together 150 representatives of cultural and public life from more than 40 countries.

The meeting was convened within the framework of the United Nations Year for Tolerance proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly at the initiative of UNESCO. In adopting its resolution 48/126 of 20 December 1993, the General Assembly expressed its conviction that "tolerance - the recognition and appreciation of others, the ability to live together with and to listen to others - is the sound foundation of any civil society and of peace".

The primary purpose of the Tbilisi Forum was to alert the international community and world public opinion to the urgency of counteracting and eliminating aggressive intolerance and its various manifestations.

The participants of the Forum adopted the Tbilisi Appeal "For peace and tolerance, for a dialogue of cultures", which stressed the moral responsibility of representatives of cultural and public life to prevent the spread of intolerance and violence, which led to conflicts and wars and negate a dialogue of cultures - the heritage of all mankind.

The participants of the Forum adopted the Programme of Action "For solidarity against intolerance, for a dialogue of cultures" to implement the goals of the Tbilisi Appeal. The Programme was adopted as a recommendation for all individuals and organizations that seek to counteract the spirit and practice of intolerance and that endorse a dialogue of cultures as a means of understanding and respecting others and as a way to mutual spiritual enrichment.

The activities contained in the Programme of Action can be implemented at the local, regional and national levels. The decisive condition for their realization is the spontaneous initiative of individuals, first of all representatives of cultural and public life and of youth, with the financial assistance of national and international organizations and foundations.

An important role in the realization of the Programme of Action belongs to UNESCO, which was a co-organizer of the Tbilisi Forum. The participants of the

Forum, who highly praised the role of UNESCO as the lead agency within the United Nations system for the United Nations International Year for Tolerance, consider that the implementation of activities in the fields of culture, science, education, information and communications with a view to strengthening the ideals of peace, democracy and tolerance should continue to be a priority of the Organization.

In this context, the following has been suggested:

I. To request the Director-General of UNESCO, within the framework of the section of the Medium-Term Strategy for 1996-2001 (28 C/4) entitled "Strategies for contributing to peace-building" and the programme and budget for 1996-1997 (28 C/5), to ensure expert, technical and financial assistance for the activities contained in the Programme of Action "For solidarity against intolerance, for a dialogue of cultures", in particular the establishment of the Tbilisi International Centre "For a dialogue of cultures, for peace and tolerance". The aim of the centre is to develop theoretical and practical scientific research on intolerance and a dialogue of cultures, and to hold international meetings of youth and to train youth leaders in the spirit of an open civil society and the ideals of peace, tolerance and democracy.

II. To request the European Commission, the Council of Europe and other European organizations to provide expert, technical and financial assistance in establishing the Tbilisi International Centre "For a dialogue of cultures, for peace and tolerance", which could make a concrete contribution to the promotion of the ideas of peace, tolerance and democracy in the Caucasus region.

III. To support the proposal of the Romanian Association of the Club of Rome to establish "The Open Forum: Caspian Sea - Black Sea - Mediterranean Sea, for a dialogue of cultures, less risk, more security".

IV. To support the organization of the Festival for Tolerance in Pretoria in September 1996 as proposed by representatives of the cultural life of South Africa, the aim of which is to contribute to a dialogue of cultures in this region.

V. To establish, taking into consideration the proposals of many participants of the Forum, an international association "For a dialogue of cultures, for peace and tolerance" with a view to implementing the ideas and proposals of the Tbilisi Forum, in particular those aimed at promoting a culture of peace, tolerance and democracy, first of all in regions of conflict and areas where major cultures and religions come into contact.

Such an international association could contribute to the establishment of groups and "clubs for dialogue" in support of tolerance and a dialogue of cultures, in particular where members of different ethnic groups and religions live in the same community. The activities of such groups and clubs could be centred around enthusiasts, teachers and research workers in schools and universities, in scientific research institutes, in associations of journalists, writers, musicians, artists and sculptors, and in sports schools and clubs.

VI. To invite the United Nations General Assembly to establish an independent international commission on tolerance with regional subcommittees. The commission should promote the ideals of tolerance and be authorized to investigate situations of intolerance and conflicts between different cultures that pose a national or regional threat to peace.

Proposed activities

I. EDUCATION

In the field of education, emphasis should be placed on teaching tolerance, especially among children and youth. To this end, teaching materials should be prepared and disseminated, and international exchanges of children and youth and the organization of summer camps and festivals for young people and students should be encouraged.

Such exchanges could be initiated by "clubs for dialogue" in higher educational establishments and universities, in towns and regions, and in local scout organizations and other youth associations.

Community, municipal and regional authorities could contribute to the development and promotion of programmes of international and intercultural "youth-to-youth" exchanges, with particular emphasis on understanding the cultures of neighbouring ethnic groups.

In particular, the Forum recommended:

1. The preparation and publication of recommendations for teacher-psychologists and other specialists on "How to bring up children in kindergartens and primary schools in a spirit of tolerance and friendship with children of other religions and cultures".

2. The preparation and publication of a brochure containing recommendations based on the experience of pluralist education in schools in Belgium and other countries where children of different religions attend the same school.

3. The preparation of a text on the history of intolerance, which could be incorporated into school textbooks or school history readers.

4. The preparation and publication of a recommendation on how to conduct classes on tolerance in schools. In this regard, the experience of schools in Israel and other countries where children of emigrants from different countries attend the same classes could be taken into account.

5. The preparation and publication of recommendations on how to write school essays on the topics of tolerance and a dialogue of cultures.

6. The organization of competitions in schools for the best essay on tolerance and the organization of visits to other countries for the winners, including invitations between twin cities.

7. The organization of student summer schools based on the theme "Through a dialogue of cultures to a culture of peace, tolerance and democracy".

8. The devotion of one session of the International Conference on Education to the theme "Teaching tolerance through a dialogue of cultures".

9. The inclusion of education for tolerance in art classes so that children can discover the art of other cultures.

10. The preparation of a manual for schools and higher educational institutions on the issues of international security and arms control with a view to teaching young people how to prevent war and armed conflicts. This project could be carried out by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and UNESCO.

11. The publication of books on the history of religion through manifestations of tolerance and intolerance.

12. The publication of teaching materials devoted to instruction about Islamic culture for schools in European countries.

II. CULTURE

In the field of culture, the intellectual community should encourage the organization of meetings and symposia aimed at discussing tolerance and proposing concrete measures for promoting the ideals of tolerance through art. Representatives of diverse fields of intellectual activity could play a major role combating intolerance, particularly in regions of conflict.

In particular, the Forum recommended:

1. The organization of national and international festivals devoted to a "dialogue of cultures".

2. The organization of festivals of cinematographic and television films and the production of documentary films on the topic "For a dialogue of cultures, against intolerance".

3. The organization of music and literary festivals and competitions to promote the ideals of tolerance and peace.

4. The organization of art and photography exhibitions with the awarding of prizes for the best works on the themes of tolerance, intolerance and dialogue of cultures.

5. Participation in international meetings of poets and writers in Mondorff (Luxembourg, 1997).

6. The organization of exhibitions of children's drawings based on the theme "All the children of the planet are brothers and sisters", with the awarding of prizes for the best drawing from each country.

7. The publication of a book containing the most vivid messages for tolerance by cultural and public figures of our century.

8. Encouragement of the organization of international meetings based on the theme of the cultural similarity of different peoples (for example, festivals of polyphonic music and songs - Corsica, Spain, Georgia and so on).

9. The inclusion of the one hundred thirtieth anniversary of the birth of the great Georgian painter Niko Pirosmani in the plan and calendar of memorable dates of UNESCO.

10. Encouragement of the organization of meetings of cultural figures representing minor languages within the framework of the European poetry festival in Louvain, Belgium.

III. SOCIAL SCIENCES

In the discussion of activities in the field of social sciences, the close interdependence of intolerance and violence was stressed. Interregional exchanges and cooperation are of primary importance for the prevention of conflicts. In this regard, several proposals were made for holding regional seminars and meetings on conflict issues and studying stereotypes of prejudice and other dangerous aspects of intolerance.

In particular, the Forum recommended:

1. The preparation of a study entitled "Contribution of different cultures to world civilization" (possibly under the auspices of UNESCO).

2. The holding of an international conference of interested cultural figures, based on the model of German-French and French-German institutes.

3. Support for the initiative of the Institute of Islamic Civilization, based in Moscow, to hold international conferences on Islam, taking into consideration the experience of the International Conference on Islam held in May 1995.

4. Encouragement of the establishment of cooperation between European universities and academies within the framework of the project "Dialogue of cultures".

5. Encouragement of the transfer of experience in cultural cooperation from the peoples of Latin America to countries in conflict regions, such as the Balkans and the Caucasus).

6. The development of table games for young people with a view to promoting the ideas of peace, tolerance and a dialogue of cultures.

7. Support for the activities of women's solidarity groups in response to emergency situations (wars, revolutions, natural disasters and so on), which help promote tolerance and dialogue between different cultures.

8. The broadening of a network of UNESCO Chairs in the social sciences for the promotion of a culture of tolerance, peace, democracy and human rights.

IV. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

In the field of information and communication, more vigorous efforts should be made to promote the ideals of tolerance and the culture of peace through the mass media. The holding of radio and television debates on tolerance should be encouraged. The organization of libraries and sets of video films and musical recordings devoted to the theme of tolerance should be supported.

In particular, the Forum recommended:

1. The issuance of a publication dealing with the Tbilisi International Forum.

2. The implementation of the project "Young people against violence on the screen" (UNESCO, together with the World Organization of the Scout Movement).

3. The holding of television round tables devoted to the theme "A dialogue of cultures as a response to intolerance".

4. Support for the proposal for an international day of tolerance with a view to promoting, through the mass media, the ideals of peace and tolerance and alerting world public opinion to the growing threat of aggressive intolerance.